

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 16, 1921.

JAPANESE WOMEN MAINSTAY OF MIKADO'S POWER
Cling to Conservative Ideas and Prove Docile at All Times

Working Classes Bear Larger Share of Labor Burden and Bring Up Large Families---Women of Higher Caste More Advanced but Few Are Actively Feministic---Early Marriages Encouraged by Government and Divorces Are Rare---Just What Part the Geisha Girl Plays in the National Life---Keen Analysis of Feminine Nippon by a New York Herald Staff Correspondent Shows Tenor of Mind

SUPPLEMENTING the series of illuminating articles on Japan that have been an outstanding feature of *The New York Herald* from day to day, is the accompanying study of the women of Nippon. Louis Seibold, *The Herald's* staff correspondent whose observations in the Orient are furnishing such a wealth of news material, shows in this article the same keenness of deduction that characterizes his estimates of naval, military and political matters in the Far East.

That the women of any progressive nation are important factors in its policies goes almost without saying. How the Japanese women are reacting in the Island Empire's march forward is one of the most interesting features of Mr. Seibold's studies. Their part in Japanese progress, while quiet and unheralded, has been large. Just how large is strikingly shown.

By LOUIS SEIBOLD.

Special Correspondent of THE NEW YORK HERALD.

Copyright, 1921, by THE NEW YORK HERALD.
YOKOHAMA, Japan, Sept. 28.

ALMOST one-half of the population of Japan proper is female. It is also the most picturesque portion, because neither in costume, customs, thought nor desire has the Japanese female of the species surrendered to Western influences. The "vulgar anachronisms" which Japanese philosophers and scholars assert is changing the standards of the empire and destroying the respect for the glories of ancient forms has but little affected the Japanese woman.

A few of the younger set, educated abroad, go in for the higher education, wrist watches, cocktail drinking and covertly practise the newest steps in dancing; but by and large the Japanese woman of 1921 looks and acts pretty much the same as did her honored ancestor of 2,000 years ago. For that reason she is, as said, the most interesting half of the population of the empire.

She has certainly more than contributed her part to the propagation of the race, because she has few if any interests outside of the bearing and rearing of children. One explanation for the great increase in the population of Japan, which approximates a net annual gain of 800,000 to fight for survival in their overcrowded island home, dates back to the Russo-Japanese war. That conflict exacted a heavy toll of the Mikado's soldiers before the armies of the hitherto invulnerable Czar had been defeated. Japanese leaders, voicing their alarm with the divine authority of the Emperor, united in warning the people against the evils of race suicide.

Race Suicide an Act of Horror to Japanese Women

The statistics prove that the warning was not unheeded. The latest available figures show that of the 57,000,000 of population living on the islands in the main Japanese group there are 38,625,617 males and 28,442,099 females, the division of the sexes therefore being almost equal. Of the population 37,530,709 are married, unions being encouraged at an early age, with a recent tendency toward more mature matches.

It is not unusual to see a boy of 17 and a girl two years younger parents of one and sometimes two children. Marriage is easy in Japan, being generally arranged by professional matchmakers among the lower classes, and very frequently the participants do not even take the trouble to make official record of the fact. Family influences usually dictate unions, after the French custom. Once married, however, the matches usually stick, and domestic discord is the exception rather than the rule.

A national custom that is giving way before other Occidental innovations is the legal adoption of the husband by the wife's family, particularly if she possesses property. For several hundred years a husband was not only adopted by the family of the wife but he was compelled to take her name by the ordinary processes of adoption prevailing in other countries.

A very interesting incident of this sort recently came before one of the courts. The wife of a professor named Goto, connected with the faculty of the Tokio Imperial University, sought the assistance of the law to compel him to support herself and child. Mrs. Goto testified that the professor was legally adopted by her family in accordance with the ancient custom while he was still a poor student in the high school of Kanagawa.

After he had signed the adoption contract they were married and he finished his studies at the expense of the family of the wife and started on the road to pro-

perity and fame. A few years ago Prof. Goto, who was charged by the wife with having surrendered to Western influences, became involved in a quarrel with his mother-in-law, whose name he bore. He thereupon left his wife and child, but under the Japanese law was compelled to use the name of the wife's family.

When the professor was summoned to court he offered no defence against the charges made by his wife and mother-in-law, but he offered to pay 4,000 yen (\$2,000) in four annual instalments to his wife if she would consent to the cancellation of the contract, permit him to use his own name and get a divorce. The offer was not accepted.

Divorces Not Common Here:

Wife May Not Plead Infidelity

Divorces are not nearly so numerous in the Mikado's kingdom as they are in more enlightened America, England and France, though the causes for which separations may be obtained are much the same. In 1918 there were 58,112 divorces, or a trifle more than one-tenth of 1 per cent. Infidelity is rarely one of the charges lodged against the wife and figures infrequently in applications in which the husband is defendant for a very singular reason. This is that a wife is not privileged to allege infidelity against her husband unless the husband of the other woman prosecutes his wife and her paramour.

The husband may maintain a mistress (and many do), but the wife is debarred from securing divorce on that ground. In the view of the law of Japan a child is given preference over the wife in inheriting the property of husband and father, but she may become heir to bequeathed property. A boy always has precedence over a girl, even if the former be the illegitimate son of the father of both, which is by no means of rare occurrence.

The Text Books of Ethics for the Higher Girls' School issued by the Department of Education of Japan provides a fairly comprehensive view of the legal status of the wife. It is written there that "a wife should aspire to become a good wife, and next a wise mother. . . . It is the everyday duty of the wife to welcome her husband with a gentle look and a kind word when he returns home in the evening fatigued with the day's task. At times she may help in the husband's work."

The marriage contract (negotiated by mutual consent or civil process) does not contain the words "love, honor and obey." On this point, however, the Japanese Book of Ethics says:

"Obedience to the husband is expected of the wife as a matter of course. In case he should bring disgrace on the (wife's) family he should be remonstrated with with candor and gentle words. Jealousy and angry words should be avoided."

In the Japanese family the mother-in-law of the wife is practically the boss of the domestic establishment, for it is written thus in the Book of Ethics:

Mother-in-Law 'Is Boss

In Japanese Home

"Her husband's parents become her own. Absence of harmony is often witnessed between husbands' mothers and the daughters-in-law and is usually traceable to the latter's disobedience. The mother-in-law may become too conservative in thought to go on smoothly with the new daughter-in-law trained in new ideas, but patience and sincerity on the latter's part will insure harmony."

There is no restriction on the privileges of a wife to help her husband in his work. The fact is that more than half the female population of Japan are laborers, not only in the home and in industrial establishments, but they share on equal terms the arduous field labor in the muck of the rice paddies under the broiling sun. Although some improvement in conditions has been made during the last ten years, the latest figures available regarding woman labor are those tabulated for 1917, which classified 1,000,000 women as domestic servants, 8,500,000 engaged in agricultural operations, 1,250,000 employed in factories, 1,200,000 in commercial houses and trans-

A Japanese beauty of the higher class. While some of the Nippon women follow Occidental fashions and seek the fuller liberties of the Western cities the vast majority cling to the old traditions.



portation companies and 350,000 in Government offices.

More women than men actually cultivate the agricultural area of the country. Of these 3,500,000 are engaged in the silk-worm industry and 500,000 in the growing of tea. The fishing industry accounts for about 200,000. Eighty per cent. of these women are married and contribute to the maintenance of the household in addition to caring for it. In the towns they take along their babies when helping the head of the house pull heavily laden drays, baby being hitched to mother's back pousse fashion and sleeping peacefully in the heat and glare of the sun and during the jogging of mother's weary footsteps.

A husband usually takes the wages of the wife, particularly in the rural districts. The wages of women workers is about two-thirds of that paid to men. Domestic female servants (who are usually very good) receive small wages, the best being paid 15 yen (about \$7.50) a month, with food. In the country they get as low as \$2 a month and the coarsest kind of food.

Women in Husbands'

Shops Receive No Pay

During recent years the introduction of Western customs has opened the way for the employment of women in commercial houses and shops, but all Japanese women help in the shops on an equal footing with the employees of the husband who owns the business. She, of course, receives no pay. The shop girls receive an average of 30 yen (or \$15) a month, though a few get as high as 50 yen. Some of the bus companies of Tokio and other cities employ women conductors, who get about as much as shop girls in the way of wages.

There are about 40,000 women employed as school teachers in the country, most of them in the kindergartens and private schools. There are 5,000 dancing teachers in Tokio alone. There are probably 200,000 geisha girls (entertainers and dancers) in the country and probably as many women waitresses. The social evil, which is licensed and regulated and confined to the segregated Yoshiwaras, is represented by 200,000 more Japanese girls, between the ages of 16 and 25. Slowly but surely Western progress is driving this privileged class into the background, and the greatest liberties enjoyed by it is in the seaports like Yokohama, Osaka, Kobe, Nagasaki and Shimonoseki.

It has been noted by statisticians that there has been a very large increase in the women engaged in "sanitation" during the last few years—doctors, dentists, midwives, trained nurses, and the like. The number of women engaged in religious vocations probably aggregates 30,000—10,000 Buddhist nuns, 10,000 Shinto nuns, 7,000 attendants at shrines and temples, and probably 3,000 nuns and other female attendants of various sects, including the Christian.

Japanese women are cheerful even on wash day, as this scene on the Tagamawa River shows. Note the curious river boats with their square sails in the background.



The Marchioness Oyama and her daughter, two members of the notable military caste of the Island Empire. The husband and father is famous as Marshal Oyama.

Very little progress has been made up to date toward the adoption of equal suffrage. A bill introduced in the Diet two years ago was abandoned. Recently the advocates of equal suffrage have seized upon the unprecedented visit of the Crown Prince to European countries to seek the support of the members of the national legislature for a movement looking to the extension of suffrage to men (which is regulated by tax qualifications) and to include women.

Very few women have taken part in this movement, the recognized leaders being limited to Mrs. Atiko Yosana, a poetess; Mrs. Hiratsuka, an editor, and Mrs. Kikue, whose husband is now in prison for inciting a riot. The women generally of Japan, while seeking education, do not go in for "new movements," and particularly equal suffrage. They are not encouraged to do so by the men, and, as Japan is essentially a "man's country," the women actually have little opportunity to express their views and desires.

Foreigners in Japan are usually impressed with the fact that the wives of even the well-to-do and educated Japanese

do not figure in social entertainments to which they are invited. The wife does not usually make her appearance until the guests are about to depart, when she is summoned by the husband to make humble obeisance and express (through the husband) the honor that has been conferred upon her humble establishment. There are, of course, exceptions to this precedent, which is one of the most ancient traditions of Japan, but these are not frequent.

When the wife goes abroad in a rickshaw a black gauze shield covers the front of it, but when she walks abroad she does not attempt to conceal her face or hide her bare feet and ankles, though her kimono is full length. When a Japanese lady wears a short skirt it is very much shorter than those prescribed by Paris and New York, and even though she may show her knee the men do not consider it an event worth discussing.

In the country districts and those that fringe the great inland sea that divides Japan into the picturesque islands the women follow the example of the men and wear as few clothes as possible. When

they want to go swimming they merely slip out of their kimonos and do not always wear the scantiest of one-piece bathing suits.

Compelled by congested conditions to live on terms of intimacy with each other, there is no false modesty assumed by either sex, none of the prudery that is to be noted in the more advanced (?) peoples. Comfort is the great consideration of the Japanese, and sex differences come in for no more attention than the other commonplace features of life. Of course everybody wears clothes in Japan (more or less), but in the hot weather the amount and quality are reduced to a common sense view of the necessities.

Everybody is supposed to wear shoes in Japan, too, and everybody does; but they are not the sort of shoes that are worn in the Western world—just one piece sandals, mounted on clogs, low in dry weather and elevated to three inches for rainy or muddy wear. It is surprising how rapidly the women can clatter along with their short, mincing steps in any kind of weather and keep their feet in the sandals, which are secured by two things that bisect the foot between the big toe and the rest of the toes—hence the "cloven foot" of Japan.

In rainy weather some of them wear "rubbers," which cover the toes but provide absolutely no protection to the rest of the foot and ankle. The chief ornament in the dress of the Japanese woman is the obi. This would be described as a "bustle" in the vernacular of the West. It is a very elaborate and ornate affair, a foot high and sometimes two feet wide. It is composed of the finest silk and is most resplendent in coloring and texture—cherry, pink, blue, mauve, brown and gold dominating.

The Obi Is All Important In Japanese Costuming

The Japanese woman usually spends more for the obi of her costume than she does for all the rest of it put together. It takes the place of the "peekaboo" shirt waist or "summer furs." Every woman in Japan wears an obi, even when she is working in the fields. It comes in handy as a cradle for the baby, with the addition of a thong or strip of ribbon run under the baby's arm and around the neck of the mother.

I saw a woman in the streets of a small town bordering on the Sea of Japan a few days ago who was helping her husband by shoving a heavily laden cart and crooning to a junior who was sprawling in his nest between the obi and the kimono of his mother. When a Japanese mother wants to nurse her baby she just nurses it, no matter where she is or what anybody thinks about it, and up to date I have not seen a single bottle baby in the whole of the Mikado's empire.

The average Japanese baby is a joy. The glory of Solomon is reflected in the costumes picked out for him, or her, the combinations usually running to vivid blues, cardinal, gold, pink, cerise and purple. A little Japanese girl of three looks like nothing so much as an elaborately dressed doll.

It is a noteworthy fact that the small

Continued on Seventh Page.